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TERRORISM

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Ambassy BUENOS AIRES

December 9, 1975

Right-wing Terrorism Since Lopez Rega

a) BA-5551; b) BA-7375; c) BA-7411

1. Summary: Ex-Social Welfare Min Jose Lopez Rega was widely suspected of controlling and protecting right-wing terrorists, such as those in the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA), prior to his ouster. That the terror campaign declined for a time following his expulsion gave credence to these charges. However, regardless of his direct involvement Lopez Rega's emergence on the Argentine political scene did not create this terrorism, nor did his departure end it. It is again rampant and the AAA is back in business, though not at its former level of activity. As previously reported, AAA-type terrorist acts were and still are authored by several entities--police, labor goon squads, retired security and military personnel, some freelancing, some officially inspired and directed. Indeed, whether there has ever been a AAA organization as such, with a hierarchical structure, a tight chain of command, etc., is open to question. Be that as it may, however, the result is no less deadly. While the degree of official involvement in its activities is at present difficult to assess, that there still is official involvement is beyond doubt. End Summary.

2. According to Legatt sources, following ex-Social Welfare Min Lopez Rega's departure, an informal message was passed through Federal police ranks that previously condoned "extra-legal police activities" were to cease. There can be no doubt that there was a direct causal relationship between this message and the fact that AAA-type acts of violence immediately dropped off. Had there been any lingering doubts that the police themselves were responsible for much of the AAA's activities, this would have dispelled them. Not that right-wing violence disappeared. It declined, but was still painfully evident. On Aug 14, for example, right-wing terrorists operating under the rubric "National Justicialist Restoration Command" (see ref a) murdered the family of Mariano Fajadas, a leftist who had been killed

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in the Aug 22, 1972, Trelew massacre. That the Pujadas murder occurred just a few days before the Trelew anniversary was taken to mean that it was a warning to leftists who usually celebrate the anniversary with terrorist acts of their own. Eight PST members were gunned down in La Plata in Sept, as another example-- five on Sept 5 and three on Sept 6, including four women. These are but examples. Indeed, there were some 50 murders attributable to right-wing terrorism even during the lull between the departure of Lopez Rega and the first part of Oct. None of these, however, were carried out in the name of the AAA, nor did they have the earmarks of the AAA's style (such as dynamiting or burning the bodies of victims).

3. Right-wing violence began to pick up again in tempo just before Mrs. Peron's return to Buenos Aires on Oct 15 to reassume the presidency. The AAA made its reappearance at about that same time. Mutilated corpses began to appear again and the title "AAA" was again found at the bottom of letters threatening leftists, newsmen, and other "enemies of Mrs. Peron", with death if they did not pull in their horns. In Cordoba, the home of UCR Sen Eduardo Angeloz (a bitter critic of Mrs. Peron) was bombed, as were the headquarters of the UCR and several other opposition parties.

4. Further, a few days before Mrs. Peron's return, the ultra-rightist weekly magazine El Caudillo reappeared on newsstands (after having been out of publication since March 19 of this year). El Caudillo's offices were suspected of being the AAA's headquarters before it went out of publication, and one of its editors recently admitted to an Embassy press officer that during that time it was financed by Lopez Rega. (Now, he added, it is financed by Lorenzo Miguel). El Caudillo calls for total loyalty to "the leader." Indeed, its slogan is that "Isabel is always right because she is the leader."

5. El Caudillo not only resumed its scathing attacks against the Left, the Jews, and "malcontents", calling for stronger (read, more violent) measures to deal with them; in at least one case it actually threatened a "political enemy" with death. In its last edition in Nov it warned La Opinion's Heriberto Kahn that he would be filled full of lead if he did not stop his "campaign of lies" (see refs b and c). The AAA itself (rather than its surrogate, El Caudillo) subsequently threatened Kahn, Enrique Raab and Ernesto Ekaiser, all of La Opinion, whom it called "Communist Jews." On Nov 23, the Argentine Newspaper Publishers Association (ADEPA) protested these threats, as well as other threats received by Carlos Alberto Peralta

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and Ernesto Garcia Carmina of La Ciudad, Marcelo Phillipi of La Mañana, and Jorge Marrone of Ultima Hora.

6. Significantly, the AAA has recently turned its attentions to blocking the investigation of corruption in high places. UCR bloc leader Antonio Troccoli confirmed to an Emboff on Nov 24 that he and other members of the congressional investigating committee had recently received death threats from the AAA warning them to call off the investigation. Troccoli (protect) said he had no doubts that the threats were inspired by Mrs. Peron's immediate circle. As he put it: "If the AAA was once at the service of Lopez Rega himself, it is now at the service of the gang of Lopezreguistas around Mrs. Peron."

7. Comment: Troccoli's statement may not be altogether accurate. The AAA might still exist in one form or another even if all the Lopezreguistas had been cleaned out. Certainly, right-wing terror existed long before the advent of Lopezreguismo--as witness the Tacuaros of the early 1960s. There is no reason to believe it will disappear easily or soon with or without the Lopezreguistas. So long as a climate of violence persists in Argentina--and there is certainly no evidence to suggest it will not persist for a long time to come--right-wing as well as left-wing extremists will probably go on articulating their politics through the barrel of a gun. But what sets the present right-wing violence--especially that carried out by the AAA--somewhat apart from that of the past is the degree of official protection and support it enjoys. This support is, to be sure, surreptitious, but is nonetheless very real. Government spokesmen sometimes verbally condemn right-wing terrorism, but to date not one single right-wing terrorist has been arrested, nor one act of right-wing violence seriously investigated and its perpetrators brought to justice. The government talks of an all-out campaign against leftist terrorism--while right-wing goon squads operate at will. To be sure, the government is in a battle to the death with the leftist extremists. Thus, were it directing right-wing violence at leftist terrorists (in effect, fighting fire with fire), its motives would be rational and cogent, even if not condonable. But this is not the case. The principal targets of right-wing violence at this point are not leftist extremists; rather, they are those who are too outspoken against or openly opposed to Mrs. Peron and her entourage. Heriberto Kahn of La Opinion is not a leftist terrorist, nor is Sen Angeloz of Cordoba, nor Congressman Troccoli and the other members of the investigating committee. So long, then, as Mrs. Peron's government protects and uses terror on the right, it leaves itself open to the charge that it is no better than the extremists who use it on the left.

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